

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHYN #1153/01 1751430  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
R 241430Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY SANAA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2183  
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0102  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0256  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0067  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SANAA 001153

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP:AMACDONALD AND INR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/22/2019  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#)  
SUBJECT: THEORIES PROLIFERATE REGARDING SAADA  
KIDNAPPING/MURDER

REF: SANAA 1105

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary  
-----

¶1. (C) The German DCM shared information and his views on the recent Sa'ada kidnapping/murder with POL/E Chief on June 20. He, like most observers, dismisses ROYG intimations that the crime was perpetrated by Houthi rebels. Many theories about the perpetrators of the crime are circulating in Sana'a but it is unlikely that responsibility will be definitively placed any time soon. In any case, the attack will likely have the effect of reducing Germany's official presence in Yemen.

Bodies deceased for three days  
-----

¶2. (C) POL/E Chief spoke to a dispirited German DCM Michael Reuss on June 20 about the recent kidnapping of seven Germans (along with one Briton and one Korean) in the northern governorate of Sa'ada. Reuss explained that the bodies of three of the kidnapes discovered on June 14 (refel) had been difficult to identify because of their state of decomposition and because they had been attacked by dogs and carrion birds between the time of death and the time of discovery. He verified that all three had been killed by gunshot wounds to the head and that each had been shot multiple times. He said that, with the exception of some tearing caused by animals, the three women's clothing was intact and that there were no signs of torture. He added that, according to a forensic specialist who viewed the bodies, they had been dead for approximately three days when they were discovered, indicating that they were killed on the day they were kidnapped. While the fact that the remaining bodies have not been found points to the possibility that they may still be alive, Reuss holds out little hope.

Rejection of Houthi Culpability  
-----

¶3. (C) Reuss dismissed out-of-hand ROYG attempts to blame Houthi rebels for the kidnapping, saying that, in his opinion, the action neither fits their mode of operation nor would make any sense in terms of achieving their goals. His opinion is mirrored by most observers in Sana'a including ROYG officials. Abdulhakim al-Eryani, Director of the Foreign Minister's Office, told POL/E Chief on June 22 that he thought it much more likely that some new (perhaps Salafist) group had committed the crime because the kidnapes were believed to be involved in proselytizing.

Reuss confirmed to POL/E Chief that diaries and other items found among the possessions of the deceased strongly indicated that they were involved in evangelistic outreach that went beyond simply doing good works.

¶4. (S) Reuss believes that Northwest Regional Military Commander Ali Muhsen al-Ahmar is a likely suspect for involvement in the attack. Reuss opined that the kidnapping/murder had achieved three visible results: stirring up anti-Houthi sentiment, discomfiting President Saleh, and acting as an implicit threat to Christian evangelists. Reuss asserted that each of these results benefit Ahmar in the following ways. Ahmar is generally believed to have profited handsomely from previous fighting in Sa'ada and stands to profit again should fighting with the Houthis recommence in earnest. Ahmar has been increasingly marginalized in recent years as the President has handed more and more military power to members of his immediate family. Discrediting Saleh in front of Yemen's largest donor (Germany) would serve the dual purpose of weakening Saleh's power base and allowing Ahmar a certain amount of revenge. Finally, striking a blow against evangelical Christian would likely appeal to Ahmar's Salafist tendencies. (Comment: While Reuss makes a reasonable case to support his theory, post has no information associating Ahmar with the case. End Comment.)

#### German Presence

-----

¶5. (C) Reuss told POL/E Chief that the attack would lead to a drawing down of the official German presence in Yemen. Although he did not expect an immediate evacuation of

personnel or dependents he said he expected a steady attrition as positions are left unfilled when their current occupants depart, resulting finally in a much smaller German presence limited primarily of the cities of Sana'a, Aden and Taiz. (Note: There are currently a large number of official Germans working throughout Yemen supporting Germany's substantial development effort here. End Note.)

#### Comment

-----

¶6. (C) While the ROYG continues to try and blame al-Houthi rebels for the kidnapping and murder, none of the Embassy's contacts subscribe to that theory. Until some individual or group takes responsibility for the crime, or until the remaining victims are found (dead or alive), theories will continue to proliferate. End Comment.

SECHE